

The curator of Baghdad: a story from Guantanamo

Play review: performed Saturday 2nd May in Blackball as part of May Day celebrations.

Enter the church by the back door. Be punctual or you won't be let in. The door is slammed shut. File into the church proper. A cage made of scaffolding – a Guantanamo Bay cell – in Blackball Community Church. Sit on a pew facing the cage.

Yassif (Paul Maunder) sits on the bed in the cage. Caroline Selwood and Garyth Bensley are alternately soldiers and voices off.

Yassif goes searching for God to avoid family obligations to side with the Americans. He is fed and sheltered by a communist and becomes a messenger. He is arrested and caged. Bagged. Tortured. Transported to Guantanamo Bay. The story is interspersed with the never ending present at Guantanamo Bay.

This play, written to be performed in a chapel, is based on 'the difficult conclusion that Guantanamo Bay is the spiritual centre of late capitalism.' It is intimate and uncomfortable in its proximity, and powerful in its depiction.

Here's hoping it tours.

What is AWSM?

The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) is an organisation working towards a classless, stateless society: anarchist-communism.

We are made up of revolutionary class-struggle anarchists from across Aotearoa / New Zealand. For now, we are a small organisation with local branches in Auckland and Wellington and members in a few other centres.

As class struggle anarchists our priority is active involvement in workplace struggles and industrial action as well as community based campaigns in our neighbourhoods. We are currently involved in the struggles against residential water metering in Wellington, the 90 Day "Hire & Fire" Act nationally, strike support and more.

We publish a monthly newsheet (which you're reading right now!) and a less frequent but more in-depth theoretical magazine as well.

To be a member of AWSM, you must agree with our Aims & Principles (available on our website, <http://www.awsm.org.nz>), and be involved in the life and activity of the group. If you're interested in joining or just finding out a bit more about us, email or write to us via the contact details at the bottom of this page.



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SOLIDARITY

Issue 3 - May 2009 - FREE!

Newsheet of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement



Locked out Zeal workers stand strong!

240 flight attendants spent Thursday 7th - Sunday 10th May locked out from work across Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The attendants are contracted to Zeal 320, a shell company owned by Air New Zealand, and operate on trans-Tasman and Pacific routes for the airline.

Despite doing the same job as flight attendants contracted directly to Air NZ, the Zeal crew are paid significantly less. The Engineering, Printing & Manufacturing Union (EPMU), which represents the workers, has been negotiating with Air NZ for months, but Air NZ have been unwilling to move towards pay parity for the Zeal staff.

The Zeal staff have been engaging in low level industrial action since late March, including breaking the uniform policy and refusing to do paperwork (see *Solidarity*, Issue 2). The action was escalated with the announcement of four days of strike action for May 7th - 10th. Air NZ responded to the strike action by announcing the workers would be locked out for the same period.



In the build-up to the lockout, at least 30 Zeal staff were suspended for breaking the uniform policy. These suspensions were short, only lasting until the next shift, as due to understaffing there would

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the company that the
little people have big
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going anywhere"*
Interview, p. 2

not have been enough people to replace any Zeal staff who were suspended for longer. An EPMU spokesperson mentioned that there had been some issues with pay resuming when the suspensions finished for some workers.

Across the four days of the lockout, Zeal workers and their supporters picketed at airports and Air NZ Holiday Shops in all three centres and the Air NZ headquarters in Auckland. In addition to the EPMU, members and staff from at least 8 other unions were present to show their solidarity. In speeches and on placards on the picket lines, many unionists spoke out against contracting through shell companies, as occurs with Air NZ and Zeal 320.

While the Zeal staff are back at work, their fight for better wages and conditions continues. If Air NZ doesn't come to the table with a better offer soon, further industrial action is a possibility. In the meantime, negotiations between Air NZ and the EPMU continue.



Websites

Zealgirl's Blog
<http://zealgirl.wordpress.com/>

EPMU Zeal 320 Campaign
<http://epmu.org.nz/zeal/>

Facebook supporters group
<http://www.new.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61304859532>

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May Day



Zeal 320



Play Review

Zeal 320 Interview

The following interview with two locked out Zeal 320 workers was conducted in Wellington on the last day of the lockout, May 10th.

Solidarity: What has been the build-up to this lockout?

Zeal worker A: Over the last couple of months we've been having a few sit-downs with the company, basically trying to negotiate a fair contract and fair pay. Every time we've gone back to the table, the offers have been getting progressively worse. The last offer that they gave us was laughable.

Zeal worker B: And it's quite hard for us to accept that the company says we are earning between forty and sixty thousand dollars and that we're now asking for seventy thousand. In all honesty, if this was the case, we would not be standing here.

Zeal worker A: In fact, that's a challenge - if you would like to pay us that amount of money, we'll certainly sign on the dotted line, and we'll sign today.

...

For three years we've been putting up with terrible conditions, and the kind of contract that leaves us open to exploitation at every turn.

Zeal worker B: We're not asking to be paid any more than anyone else, we're just asking for a fair pay for a fair day's work.

Zeal worker A: It's about time they stopped treating us like second class citizens, because we're part of Air New Zealand and they need to recognise that. We're not some dirty secret that they can keep from the general public, it's out there now, and we're gonna be heard.

Solidarity: Have you ever been on a picket before? How has it been?

Zeal worker B: I've never been involved in a picket or a strike before ... we're all standing here because we know that what we're asking for is only fair. We know that the New Zealand public would agree that we deserve to be treated fairly ... and that's why everyone has taken this stand against Air New Zealand.

Zeal worker A: It's worth it for us to be out here, and we will come out in the cold, and the rain, and nothing's going to deter us, because, this is worth it for us, we're gonna fight hard. We're going to show the company that the little people have big voices, and we're not going anywhere mate.

This is an excerpt - view the full video interview at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wZd-cPwFKI>

Special Feature - May Day 2009

What is May Day?

The traditional workers holiday, 1st May, has its roots in a pagan festival that was perpetuated by the common folk of Europe, despite repeated attempts by the church and authorities to outlaw the events, renowned for mischief making and rabble-rousing.

In early May 1886, the workers of Chicago went on strike as part of the US wide struggle for an 8 hour working day, staying out in defiance of the police violence including the murder of one of their comrades. In an attempt to halt the disruption caused by the strikes, the State framed 8 anarchist union organisers for the bombing of police strike breakers. The prosecution declared that "Anarchy [was] on trial!"

On November 11th 1887, 4 were executed, another escaping the hangman by committing suicide.

3 others were imprisoned until 1889, when the innocence of the convicted was finally conceded by the State.



May 1st is a day of commemoration for these and all other

martyrs of the class struggle, as well as a traditional day of working class agitation. Today, May Day is a day for the working class to celebrate their victories, remember their heroes and organise for the future.

For more class struggle history visit: <http://www.libcom.org>



May Day reports

May Day 2009 Report: Auckland

"One Solution...REVOLUTION!" was among chants heard in the Auckland CBD this May Day as unions, political and community groups expressed opposition to the economic crisis and attacks on workers here and worldwide.

200-300 assembled at Britomart at the bottom of Queen Street at the start of the march. The largest contingent comprised supporters of the Tamil Tigers, a national liberation group fighting in the northern region of Sri Lanka. With the conflict in their homeland reaching a climax, the mood of these marchers was understandably solemn.

In addition, there were participants from the National Distribution Union, Service & Food Workers Union, Green Party, the Workers Party, Communist Workers Group, Socialist Aotearoa, AWSM and other anarchists. Other groupings included Global Peace & Justice and opponents of the Auckland Super City plan. As the march proceeded up Queen Street we were joined by members of the public, who responded to leaflets, chants and music being played.

Upon arriving at Aotea Square, speeches were given and despite the range of views offered by participants, a general theme was that whether workers are in Sri Lanka, Aotearoa or elsewhere, there is a common enemy-capitalism. Though small in size, let's hope the strong solidarity shown at this year's May Day is a sign that the fightback will increase in times to come.

May Day 2009 Report: Wellington

Mayday has traditionally been a day for the working class to pause and reflect, to remember fallen comrades and to dare speak of the day when we are free. There have been times when it has become a largely forgotten day of the year merely allowed to pass by

with little recognition but some of the good folk of Wellington helped to put it back on the agenda this year.

After a week of union based activities, talks and debates at Victoria University, as part of the student's association's "students as workers week", the festivities were wound up on May 1st at the Southern Cross bar. The night showcased 'The Brass Razzoo Band' and the 'Hobart Grass Roots Union Choir' flown over from Tasmania, who lit up the room with their satirical twists on the classic songs.

The night, organised by the Unite Union, included speeches from the two fulltime Unite organisers in Wellington, talking on topics including May Day, internationalism and class struggle in Aotearoa / New Zealand. The event also served to introduce Unite's new campaign for a living wage. Unite is seeking a citizen's initiated referendum to secure a \$15 minimum pay per hour, plus after a further three years for the minimum to be two thirds of the average weekly income - currently around the \$20 mark.

May Day 2009 Report: Blackball

Lured by the promise of the famous Hilton hospitality and a planned forum on neo-liberalism, it wasn't hard to attract a small but diverse range of people to what was arguably the birthplace of twentieth century revolutionary syndicalism in Aotearoa and the 'Red' Federation of Labour.

'Can we still think the system or does the system think us?' was the provocation of the weekend's poster, which was continued with provocations from various people during the course of the two hour forum. A wide range of topics naturally reflected the wide range

of political positions — education, the family unit, the nature of work, trade unions, community organising, feminism and motherhood, childcare, childbirth, collectivism, revolution? And while no specific answers or strategies were given, discussion was thought provoking, challenging and at all times inspiring. I think being able to hear other points of view not always considered was a major highlight of the talk — and if some felt even more depressed after the collective realisation that everything most on the left has been warning against for the last ten years has come true, then it wasn't shared by me. Personally, it simply re-enforced the fact that the old ways of organising, the old ideologies, the old party line, the old trade union talk, quite simply, has failed. Depressing? Not at all.

Besides the amazing weather and Monteiths Original on tap, the afternoon session on the Blackball 08' Strike Memorial was also rewarding. Ideas were brainstormed on the proposed museum and sculpture to be built in Blackball celebrating the 1908 strike, with particular emphasis on future May Day events, educational workshops and various activities for who the day celebrates — workers, of all shades and forms. From oral history podcast and participatory learning to May Day picnics and other class-conscious events, the future of May Day in Blackball and ongoing attempts to encourage the self-organisation of those who toil looks both positive and constructive.

